

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS
Special Called Council Meeting

December 3, 1979
4:00 P.M.

Council Chambers
301 West Second Street

The meeting was called to order with Mayor McClellan presiding.

Roll Call:

Present: Mayor McClellan, Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau, Councilmembers
Cooke, Goodman, Mullen, Snell, Trevino

Absent: None

Mayor McClellan stated that this was a Special Called Meeting for the purpose of discussing bond proposals and to consider calling a bond election.

The Mayor suggested that the Council consider calling the election for February 23, 1980. She then proposed that the following items be included in the bond package:

1. Water and Wastewater - At least \$77 million
2. Civic/convention center - \$19 million
3. Parkland acquisition - Double up on acquisition
4. Railroad crossings improvements

Mayor Pro Tem Himemlblau asked if the discussion or action last week on the Airport more or less committed a further expenditure of funds at Robert Mueller Airport.

City Manager Davidson replied that it was his understanding that he requested authority to proceed with the detailed planning toward the improvements which would require additional expenditures. He would also work with the Council as to how to pay for the improvements.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau's question as to whether revenue or general obligation bonds would be used, Mr. Davidson said that Mr. Bayless thought that possibly revenue bonds could be issued and guaranteed by increased payments from the airlines for rental fees, etc. He had not done any detailed calculations or worked with other City offices on the advantages of issuing revenue bonds instead of general obligation bonds.

Councilmember Cooke favored looking at a revenue bond issue for airport improvements and Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau supported that view also.

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau asked for clarification on the Hospital parking garage facility.

Hospital Administrator Spurck said that there was a serious parking problem around the Hospital now which would be compounded by completion of the professional office building since by a lease arrangement the lessors had the right to 150 spaces on the first floor of the parking garage that were now metered.

In response to Mayor McClellan's question, Mr. Spurck said that the staff had known about the parking problem only for about 3 months and had not foreseen it as a problem. An additional 125 spaces would be lost temporarily during the next phase of hospital construction.

Mr. Spurck felt that the 690 spaces probably were adequate for the physicians, the hospital staff and patients and visitors. However, when the hospital bonds were approved in January, 1979, the hospital staff was not aware that construction would displace physician parking and was not aware of the demands of the School of Nursing, which would require parking for about 250 additional people.

In response to Councilmember Cooke's question regarding the status of the proposed phasing out of the School of Nursing, Mr. Spurck stated that the Hospital Board was looking at it now.

Mayor McClellan expressed concern over what happened since last January's bond election that required additional parking now.

City Manager Davidson said that he did not recall any statement that staff would not come back for improvements to the hospital complex. An earlier statement related only to the hospital building. He wanted his staff to bring any needs whenever they occurred so as to help the Council determine what should be included in a bond election.

Mayor McClellan said that she had always thought that parking was part of the hospital and did not understand that the Council would be coming back for parking bonds immediately.

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau stated that she understood that it would be in two phases, but asked if financing could be through revenue rather than general obligation bonds.

Budget Director Daron Butler stated that at this point it would have to be general obligation bonds because no feasibility study had been made to see if enough revenue would be generated to create a sinking and interest fund and any additional money to pay principal and interest in the future. Facility needs could be projected but more work was needed on the financing portion.

Councilmember Cooke expressed concern over coming back to the voters just 13 months after the last bond election to ask for more money when people were told that the last election was a two-year bond election.

City Manager Davidson pointed out that initially when discussion started about a bond election, the only need he had discussed was water and wastewater. The other items had been added by some boards and commissions and Councilmembers. There were areas where the growth rate was greater than expected when the Council went for the two-year package in January, 1979. He felt an obligation to lay out those areas to the Council for consideration.

Councilmember Goodman stated that from the outset it was intended that the hospital garage be in two phases should the second phase be chosen. He understood that the parking garage was not included in the \$17 million bond package of January, 1979 and that it would be brought back at some future date for approval.

Mr. Spurck stated that since the last bond election there had been increased needs for hospital parking. The Hospital Board had recommended the increased parking spaces, and it was shown in the 1981-82 Capital Improvements Program. The additional would give a total of 1500 parking spaces at the hospital.

Councilmember Mullen asked Mr. Spurck if he saw any additional needs for the hospital area for the next two years, and Mr. Spurck replied "No." Councilmember Mullen suggested that the parking be called "health parking," rather than "hospital parking."

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelbau agreed with Councilmember Mullen and stated that as the City lost more spaces and didn't replace them, then a variance would have to be requested. The City could be in worse condition than some of the proprietary hospitals as far as parking was concerned.

Parks and Recreation

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau said that she agreed with proposed parkland acquisition, but not parkland improvements at this time.

Mr. Leonard Ehrler outlined for the Council proposed greenbelt acquisitions as follows:

Barton Creek area, Onion Creek area, along Colorado River near Montopolis area (75/86-13) - \$1,574,000, plus \$325,000 for Barton Creek

It was proposed to move up from 81-82 and 82-83 \$600,000 to 80-81 for acquisition of the Colorado River property, which would be included in the preceding figure of \$1,574,000.

Major parkland acquisition would include property in the Lake Austin area, Great Hills area, Sprinkle Cut-off, Balcones at Slaughter in the south and McCarty Lane in the south. Current neighborhood park needs totalled \$2,980,000. Property would also be purchased in the Whispering Oaks area in northwest Austin.

Mr. Ehrler stated that he would be meeting on December 4th with the Parks and Recreation Department advisory board to work on the C.I.P. to ensure that they were in line with what had been submitted to Council by Research and Budget.

Estimates from the Parks and Recreation Department for first year needs amounted to \$4,650,000 for greenbelt; \$1,555,000 for major parkland and \$1,101,000 for neighborhood parkland. The proposed acquisitions would double the figures proposed in the current CIP.

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau said that she thought it was smart to buy land now before prices increased further, but did have problems with park improvements.

Mr. Ehrler said that with few exceptions proposed improvements would not raise maintenance and operation costs, but were renovations or upgradings to offset operation and maintenance costs.

Responding to Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau's question, Mr. Ehrler said that the Waterloo Park Center (80/86-02 - \$100,000) was the old Fehr-Granger Building, which was now the center for the Senior Lunch Program and volunteer program. Extensive renovations were necessary to make the building workable.

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau commented that she thought the site should have another name because she did not think of it as a senior center at this time or a senior luncheon kitchen. She just saw adding another facility.

Councilmember Trevino thought that the City should acquire land on both sides of the Colorado River below Longhorn Dam to Montopolis Bridge for a Hike and Bike trail with some facilities for fishing. Mr. Erhler agreed and said that contacts had been made with the property owners. \$600,000 has been allocated for purchase of a corridor on both sides appraised about a year ago at \$1,000/acre, but probably was higher now. Centex had platted the property all the way to the river in February, 1978. Negotiations also were underway for acquisition of the Grove Park property.

In summary, Mr. Ehrler stated that Research and Budget was recommending a one-year package of doubling up on the purchase of parkland and greenbelt to fulfill obligations to the public. Proposed improvements would not increase operation or maintenance costs, but would enhance operation and maintenance or bring them into line. The total amount needed for the one-year period would be about \$12 million for land, which was double the amount budgeted in the CIP. Maintenance and operation costs now budgeted did not depart from the amount approved in the 5-year CIP.

Councilmember Cooke stated he felt that the approximately \$4 million requested for park improvements violated the intent of what he went to the voters for last January. He had no problem with parkland acquisition, particularly Barton Creek parkland.

Mr. Ehrler stated that items in the CIP which voters approved in the bond election would begin on time as nearly as possible. If the proposed property acquisitions could be made, he thought all things would fall into proper categories.

There was discussion among the Council as to whether there was agreement on a two or three year bond package during the last bond election, with some Councilmembers objecting to another bond election in less than two years from the last one on items similar to those areas approved in January, 1979.

Railroad Crossings

Daron Butler commented that the Railroad Crossing Improvements (74/61-02) for \$4,107,000 was a 5-year program which included about a \$2.5 million item in the fifth year CIP. It was different from any other items in the proposal because during recent CIP deliberations, Council had requested that when staff brought back any information on a bond program that the full package be included for railroad crossings. The total for the first three years was about \$1.4 million, with the rest being in the 4th and 5th years. The figures had been adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Ternus said that the \$1.4 million would cover approximately one-third of the program. There were about 35 intersections which were unprotected crossings. Another 10-12 intersections needed to be upgraded within the next 5 years. There also would be additional intersections being brought into the City within that time period. The \$4.1 million would bring all of the crossings to have a minimum of flashers at all crossings while some would have gates and special kinds of flashers. In some instances it would be the physical design of the intersection; in others it would be a new device where one did not currently exist; in others it would be up-grading devices

currently in place. Mr. Ternus emphasized that the money would not take care of all crossings in the future, but would cover the ones identified today. The Council had an option of a 3 or 5 year program.

Water and Wastewater

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau asked if the proposed Water and Wastewater Improvements were in line with what was approved in the CIP.

Daron Butler stated that the amount of money identified in the memorandum as \$77 million plus was the exact amount of money for bond authority based upon the CIP approved by Council on September 25, 1979. It was a raw number in 1979 dollars and was the program approved in terms of a 3-year program and had been carried forward by staff to the present. No projects had been added or deleted based on the September 25th Council decision.

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau stated that she had no problem with the water and wastewater program as presented and suggested that the Council go with it as is.

Councilmember Goodman agreed. He then asked the City Manager to lay out the options on other items to be considered.

In response to Councilmember Cooke's question, Mr. Butler said that he understood that the Council wanted a 5-year program on the railroad crossings. In every other instance, staff had taken the 1980-81 approved CIP, added one additional year of authority and presented options to the Council. Exceptions were the hospital garage and certain airport improvements based on communications with Council last Thursday. Water and Wastewater was a 3-year program, with no inflationary factor built in. \$18 million for the electric utility would place that department on the same 3-year cycle as water and wastewater.

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau asked Mr. Butler to figure in an inflationary factor for water and wastewater for the next time, because she felt that it was important. An inflationary factor had been included in the electric utility figures.

Mr. Butler stated that in addition to the hospital garage and airport items, funds had been included for flood control on Upper Waller Creek because it had been identified in the HCD refunding process. Funds for municipal facilities planning were also included. Those four items had never appeared in the CIP, but may have come up in another context or circumstance.

City Manager Davidson commented that requests had been received from various municipal departments indicating office space would be needed soon. He felt that either in connection with the downtown revitalization program or by itself, some provision must be made to plan for future office space. For that reason, some money was reflected under general government so that the Council could consider funding for planning the use of municipal property located between 1st and 2nd Streets, hopefully in connection with the downtown program.

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau asked how much reduction would there be in rentals after the municipal complex was planned and built since the City was presently renting quite a bit of office space.

City Manager Dividson said that he didn't have a projection, but felt that a study should be made to cover the City's office space needs for the next 5 to 20 years.

Mayor McClellan asked that the area of libraries be discussed in the next work session, since it was not on the last bond issue.

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau stated that she was not anxious to see it on another bond issue. She was under the opinion that it was cheaper to rent space rather than build facilities.

Councilmember Goodman commented that the bulk of the money suggested for library use was for renovation of the old main library (\$450,000). He agreed that whenever possible, it was better to lease space rather than build.

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau stated that she thought Human Services and some of the Health items could come under the community block grant funding and would like to see them deleted from any bond election.

Regarding the police building complex and renovations to Municipal Court, Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau asked if there would be lag time if renovation of the Court was delayed and the police complex finished.

Mr. Butler said that money available so far would build a new police facility and some parking, along with a training academy and pistol range. There was no money for remodeling the existing facility for court or other uses. If the Council did not include renovation money in the upcoming election, then it would be asked for in the next election after that one. If not approved then a lag would start occurring, based upon the next scheduled bond election.

Mr. Davidson said that for the next session a chart would be prepared to show which of the general obligation areas where funding was either depleted now or would be at the end of the next fiscal year. The information would help the Council to determine which items to put on future bond elections and at what rate.

Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau commented on how low the per capita indebtedness was for general obligation bonds and felt more inclined to look at new items which had not been included in the last bond election or previous elections. Such items included airport improvements, planning funds, convention center and parking garage for the medical complex.

Councilmember Cooke asked if any of the convention center improvements could be financed by revenue bonds.

City Manager Davidson replied that he did not think that any part of the convention center could or should be financed through revenue bonds, but the proposed parking structure possibly could be financed by revenue bonds. Figures would be examined by staff prior to the next session on bonds to see if it might be possible for that type of financing.

Mayor McClellan asked if the following list covered every area to be discussed at the next session:

1. Water and Wastewater
2. Parkland acquisition
3. Railroad crossings
4. Civic/convention center
5. Hospital parking
6. Libraries
7. Municipal Court Improvements
8. Airport Improvements

Councilmember Goodman felt that the entire public works area should be discussed before projects were eliminated.

Councilmember Trevino asked that Human Services needs for two community centers be included in the list of items to be discussed further, and stated that the City needed to get away from federal money to do that type of work. There was a brief discussion regarding continuing federal funding for such projects.

Motion

Councilmember Goodman moved that the Council call a bond election for February 23, 1980. The motion, seconded by Councilmember Cooke, carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Mayor McClellan, Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau, Councilmembers Cooke, Goodman, Mullen, Snell, Trevino
Noes: None

The Council, by unanimous consent, set a Special Called Council Meeting for 5:00 p.m., December 17, 1979 to discuss the bond election further.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned its meeting at 5:50 p.m.

APPROVED

Carole Keeton McClellan
Mayor

ATTEST:

Graw Monroe
City Clerk